

EAT LOCAL CHALLENGE

Dear friends, supporters, funders, and our community,

As the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee embarks upon the tenth year of the Eat Local Challenge, we recognize the current state of the world is not new and we cannot ignore it any longer.

Our eyes are open to the ways that our city has exploited the labor and joy of those who made and continue to make it the place we love. We are only a “world class food destination” because of people of color and we continue to devalue their labor, their history, and their bodies. We ask people of color to work long and erratic hours for little to no pay or safety net as their culture is used to build up a city that no longer supports them. The “new New Orleans” is a whiter and less equitable one and we recognize the Eat Local Challenge’s place in that exploitation.

When challenging people to eat at restaurants that only procure local food, we are often asking them to eat at affluent white owned restaurants. When we accept paid sponsorships it is often from restaurants and businesses that have a robust marketing budget, which often means better loan agreements, generational wealth and a celebrity chef. Hosting events at distilleries and breweries often mean asking participants to go into predominantly white spaces. While we have made efforts to make the Eat Local Challenge more equitable, we have failed and will likely continue to fail. We are sorry. We are sorry we propped up the very systems that have stolen land from black farmers and exploited immigrant labor. We are sorry we have encouraged you to support restaurants and chefs who pay little and offer few to no opportunities for people of color to advance. We are sorry we have contributed to the continued racism and misogyny that plague the food system.

We want to do better. We want to celebrate and credit the people and families and labor of the people who built our city and very food we eat and love. This year we are giving the Eat Local Challenge back to the community who built it. We will not do it perfectly but we promise that we will continue to work tirelessly to try. We want to listen and learn and change.

To our white partners and friends, we ask you to look at how you eat and who you support. To our supporters, we ask you to do the hard work alongside us. There is a lot of work to be done. This inequitably designed system is the work of those in power and the time has come to look at how we eat and how we value the people who created the culture we claim to love. Pulling up a seat at your table isn’t good enough anymore. We need to not only look at who needs to be at the table, we need to look at who to bring the table to as well. We invite you to listen and learn alongside us.

To our black and brown friends and neighbors, we see you. We honor your contribution to the food system.

This year’s Eat Local Challenge will be different. We don’t yet know what that looks like, but are working hard on it. For Give NOLA Day tomorrow, we invite you to support organizations doing equity work in the food system.

Sincerely,

Brynn Comeaux Hutzler and Elisa Muñoz-Miller
New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee

